

# Our English Page

## Some Literary Notes from Sweden.

By Ellen Lundberg-Nyblom.

In Sweden, as elsewhere, there is at the moment a vogue for the writing of memoirs. There seems to be almost a feverish desire, even on the part of illiterate persons, to give the public glimpses of their private lives, which too often are not particularly interesting. But now and then a name comes to the fore which has real literary significance, and then it is always highly interesting to trace the growth and development of the author's personality back of the events and experiences which he narrates.

Such a man is Carl Gustaf Laurin. He published at Christmas, 1929, the first volume of his Memoirs. Carl Laurin stands, as to his age, on the frontier of the older generation, and his name has for more than twenty-five years been an important one in our literary world. He has never been a writer of fiction. From his earliest youth his interest has centered in the history of civilization and of art, including the theater, which last has become one of the chief fields for his writing. In the course of time he has achieved a prominent place as one of the most cultivated and distinguished connoisseurs of art in every form, and his literary production constitutes an admirable collection of well known and widely read works. His History of Art, which has gone through nine editions, is used in schools and colleges and has won a richly merited success as a most enlightening work, written in a style at once brilliant and readable. The splendidly illustrated Jubilee Edition (published last year to celebrate the author's sixtieth birthday) in three gorgeous volumes, is a gem of printing and bookbinding, a credit to the publisher, P. A. Norstedt. The world of beauty is here presented in a way that often gives the interpretations a shimmer of personal charm as kindly, modest, and full of and fine originality which helps to fix the various subjects in one's memory. Among his other works, Kinsmen is a very clever analytical study of several nations akin to the Swedish: the Norwegians, the Danes, the Finlanders, and the Dutch. Although his criticism spares no one, not even the Swedes, his satire never resorts to exaggeration. His humor and his exuberant love of life in all its manifestations, particularly the nobler ones, prevent him from being cruel in his criticism. The Comic Figure and Its History in Art is another large volume, richly illustrated and containing brilliant and witty references to the drawings representing hundreds of characteristic human "comic" figures culled from the history of art through the centuries. Not all of the figures are merely comic. Many of them are more than that, but each of them has something in it to arouse laughter — even if, at times, it is only a smile of commiseration or contempt. They have been collected after careful research showing a profound knowledge of the sources of material.

In another book, Vald och Vild (Violence and Prejudice), published in 1910, Laurin reveals himself as a man with a strong personal feeling of right and wrong. With his clear, keen intelligence and his warm courageous heart, he sets before us the Dreyfus case. The subtitle of the book is Nationalistic and Revolutionary Movements in France During the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century. It treats of several important and tragic historical events. But what is most impressive in the book is Laurin's quiet and masterly interpretation of the legal proceeding mentioned above, that dreadful political intrigue which shook the civilized world during many years. In this book Carl Laurin has acquired a strong, earnest style. His wit is laid aside, but the vivid and fascinating account is not devoid of brilliant intellectuality. One sees him as a loyal friend and defender of humanity and justice, and the manner in which he reaches his goal makes one admire and love this sincere tribute to civilization.

In his social life Carl Laurin is fascinating and sprightly. His vast knowledge and his tenacious memory supply him with a seemingly inexhaustible store of names, facts, events, experiences, and anecdotes. Into his conversation are always woven metaphors, references to and recollections of famous personalities, and utterances which fit in with what he has to relate or demonstrate. His life has, in almost every respect, been a great success. And yet, strange as it may seem, he has remained just as kindly, modest, and full of enthusiasm as he was when a young student at the University of Uppsala. Among his other books are two interesting and amusing essays: National Temperaments and the Swedish: Types of Women in Different Countries. 'Ros och Ris' and the Dutch. (Praise and Castigation), in three volumes, contains his innumerable criticisms of the Swedish drama. It is a conglomerate of so much wit, humor, and serious understanding that it forms a monument in our history of the theater during Carl Laurin's lifetime, and it will certainly be esteemed in the future as a valuable source for researches in that art in Sweden.

His latest book, published at Christmas, 1929, is the above mentioned volume of his Memoirs. It may be regarded as the overture to the successful drama of his life. His social-cultural material is excellent, and the insight that he gives us into the good old times in Stockholm — its homes, its schools, and the surrounding country with its villas and country houses — is full of local color and the spirit of the time. Here and there his own witty self bursts out in some description or picture — pure "Laurinian." But one is undeniably drawn to the young man who reveals himself as the personality one has known for so many years and displaying the facility and charm that are Carl Laurin's special gifts.

Laurin still works as an advanced lecturer in the history of art. He is the founder of the society called Art in School and of another interesting association for The Adornment of Stockholm with Works of Art. These two societies have both produced splendid artistic results.

The first volume of the Memoirs has been received with the greatest interest. Laurin promises three more volumes. His life has really been such a rich one that it seems as if it would be a grateful task to give it a vital and fascinating literary form. With his many excellent qualities as a writer, Carl Laurin is quite likely to make this work a 'chef d'oeuvre'. When he speaks it is worth while to listen.

## To be continued.

## Quotations.

An empty stomach is not a good political advisor. — Albert E. Einstein.

Science is an attempt to set in order the facts of experience. — Sir Arthur Eddington.

There are no truer pictures of human beings than those on passports. — Juan Jose Sigura.

It is the bored of woman who is most dangerous to the cause of peace. — Ellen Wilkinson, member of Parliament.

Whenever any group, zealous for power, makes loyalty to one of its own members the test of citizenship and the object of any election, then sooner or later corruption comes. — William Allen White.

Evidence is overwhelming that modern man is to no appreciable degree the intellectual superior of his predecessor who lived on the far fringe of historic time. — Professor William Pope, Cambridge.

I don't believe the Soviet will get ahead of America industrially for many years. — Professor Alexander Fedotov, at Moscow trial.

Every time a woman smiles benignly or pours out compassionate thought upon others she is limning in some curves and coloring of charm and beauty. — Dr. Joseph Oldfield.

No healthy boy would say that he did not want to grow up. If he did I should advise taking him to a psychoanalyst. — Professor A. E. Heath.

## We Two.

The days grow shorter, the nights grow longer. The headstones thicken along the way. And life grows sadder, but love grows stronger. For those who walk with us day by day.

The years come quicker, the laugh comes slower. The courage is lesser to do and dare. The tide of joy in the heart falls lower. And seldom covers the reefs of care.

But all true things in the world seem truer And the better things of earth seem best; And friends are dearer as friends are fewer, And love is all as our sun dips west.

Then let us clasp hands as we walk together And let us speak softly in love's sweet tone.

For no man knows on the morrow whether We two pass on — or but on alone.

## — Another Unknown.

What do you get in exchange for your loss of humor? Jazz and the blues. Humor gives balance. — Power C. Malley.

## Kommunist avsatt från befattning.

Stockholm den 28 febr. Statstjänarnes centralorganisations representantskaps beslut på fredagens möte att avsäta kommunistiska riksdagsmannen Edolf Andersson från sekreterarebefattningen.

## Fattigvårdsstyrelse vägrar ansvarsfrihet.

Skänninge den 3 mars. Skänninge stadsfullmäktige har vägrat stadens fattigvårdsstyrelse ansvarsfrihet till följd av att dess ordförande, handlanden Tengdell, förskingrat inalles 10.75 kronor.

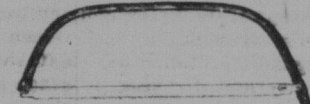
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